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ABSTRACT

To help schools and districts in their efforts to create more productive and effective learning environments, Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) researchers developed the School Practices Survey, a tool districts and schools can use to assess teachers, administrators, and others in the school community regarding their perceptions of their school's and district's policies and practices as they relate to learner-centered principles. This guide is designed to help school or district personnel administer the School Practices Survey. The first section of the guide provides an overview of the survey and its purposes. The second section provides background technical information about the development of the survey instrument and includes guidelines for schools and districts for planning and implementation of the survey. Section 3 reviews guidelines for analyzing survey data manually, with Microsoft Excel, and with Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software. Section 4 discusses using survey results for staff development planning or other purposes. (Contains 18 references.) (SLD)

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# SCHOOL PRACTICES SURVEY

## *User Guide for Practitioners*

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# SCHOOL PRACTICES SURVEY

McREL

## *User Guide for Practitioners*

Patricia A. Lauer, Ph.D.

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*October 2000*

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# *Section 1*
# INTRODUCTION

In 1993, the American Psychological Association and the Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory, now known as the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning, developed a set of learner-centered principles that are consistent with more than 100 years of research on learning and teaching. These principles, which are shared and applied by many excellent schools, are based on the essential finding from research and practice that students learn best in an environment whose primary focus is the learner and the learning process. In 1997, these principles were revised and expanded. The resulting principles form an essential framework that schools and districts can use as they develop new policies, redesign instruction, curriculum, assessment, instructional management, and teacher education, and strengthen parent and community involvement. The 14 learner-centered principles, listed in Table 1, cluster around four areas:

> *Cognitive and Metacognitive Factors* — Factors that describe the constructive and goal-oriented nature of learning and thinking, the influence of prior learning and environmental context, and the learner's use of thinking strategies and self-monitoring.
>
> *Motivational and Affective Factors* — Factors that describe the motivational influences of the learner's emotional states, beliefs, interests, and personal choices and the relationship between motivation and learner effort.
>
> *Developmental and Social Factors* — Factors that describe the constraints posed on learning by different levels of learner development and the positive impact of quality interpersonal relationships on learning.
>
> *Individual Differences Factors* — Factors that describe learner differences in learning strategies and linguistic and cultural backgrounds and factors which describe the necessity of high and appropriate standards for all learners.

To help schools and districts in their efforts to create more productive and effective learning environments, McREL researchers developed the School Practices Survey (SPS). The SPS is a tool schools and districts can use to assess teachers, administrators, and others in the school community regarding their perceptions of their school's or district's policies and practices as they relate to the learner-centered principles (LCPs).[1]

The purpose of the *School Practices Survey: User Guide for Practitioners* is to help school or district personnel administer the School Practices Survey. The first section of this guidebook provides an overview of the survey and its purpose, discusses why schools or districts

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[1] For a more detailed discussion of the development of the survey and its statistical properties, see *School Practices Survey User Manual*, by P. A. Lauer, 1999, published by McREL. This document also reports pilot- and field-testing results.

**Table 1. The Learner-Centered Principles**

*Cognitive and Metacognitive Factors*

**Principle 1: Nature of the learning process.** The learning of complex subject matter is most effective when it is an intentional process of constructing meaning from information and experience.

**Principle 2: Goals of the learning process.** The successful learner, over time and with support and instructional guidance, can create meaningful, coherent representations of knowledge.

**Principle 3: Construction of knowledge.** The successful learner can link new information with existing knowledge in meaningful ways.

**Principle 4: Strategic thinking.** The successful learner can create and use a repertoire of thinking and reasoning strategies to achieve complex learning goals.

**Principle 5: Thinking about thinking.** Higher order strategies for selecting and monitoring mental operations facilitate creative and critical thinking.

**Principle 6: Context of learning.** Learning is influenced by environmental factors, including culture, technology, and instructional practices.

*Motivational and Affective Factors*

**Principle 7: Motivational and emotional influences on learning.** What and how much is learned is influenced by the learner's motivation. Motivation to learn, in turn, is influenced by the individual's emotional states, beliefs, interests and goals, and habits of thinking.

**Principle 8: Intrinsic motivation to learn.** The learner's creativity, higher order thinking, and natural curiosity all contribute to motivation to learn. Intrinsic motivation is stimulated by tasks of optimal novelty and difficulty, relevant to personal interests, and providing for personal choice and control.

**Principle 9: Effects of motivation on effort.** Acquisition of complex knowledge and skills requires extended learner effort and guided practice. Without learners' motivation to learn, the willingness to exert this effort is unlikely without coercion.

*Developmental and Social Factors*

**Principle 10: Developmental influences on learning.** As individuals develop, they encounter different opportunities and experiences different constraints for learning. Learning is most effective when differential development within and across physical, intellectual, emotional, and social domains is taken into account.

**Principle 11: Social influences on learning.** Learning is influenced by social interactions, interpersonal relations, and communication with others.

*Individual Differences Factors*

**Principle 12: Individual differences in learning.** Learners have different strategies, approaches, and capabilities for learning that are a function of prior experience and heredity.

**Principle 13: Learning and diversity.** Learning is most effective when differences in learners' linguistic, cultural, and social backgrounds are taken into account.

**Principle 14: Standards and assessment.** Setting appropriately high and challenging standards and assessing the learner and learning progress — including diagnostic, process, and outcome assessment — are integral parts of the learning process.

*Note:* From *Learner-Centered Psychological Principles: A Framework for School Reform and Redesign* (rev. ed.) by the American Psychological Association Board of Educational Affairs, November 1997, Washington, D.C., APA. Available online at http://www.apa.org/ed/lcp.html. Copyright © 1997 by the American Psychological Association. Reprinted with permission.

might administer the SPS, and gives examples of how to use data that are obtained. The section concludes with a complete description of each of the LCPs and the four categories into which these categories are organized. The second section includes a brief discussion about how the SPS was developed along with guidelines for administering the survey. The third section provides step-by-step instructions for analyzing and reporting data from the survey, both by hand and by using software. Section four suggests ways in which schools and districts can use their survey results to understand respondents' beliefs and perceptions and to design appropriate staff development activities. Finally, the appendix contains the SPS instrument and blank forms for manual data analysis. This guidebook is accompanied by a Data Analysis Diskette, which has worksheets for use with Excel and command files for use with SPSS programs. (The actual Excel and SPSS software must be provided by the user.)

## An Overview of the Research

The learner-centered principles that are the focus of this guidebook were developed by a task force of researchers representing expertise across a range of disciplines. After the principles were developed, Alexander and Murphy (1998) conducted an extensive review and analysis of research related to the principles in the areas of learning and instruction, motivation, and development. Alexander and Murphy's analysis revealed a strong research basis of support for the principles. For example, related to Principle 11, when learners perceive the classroom environment as encouraging and supportive, they perform better academically (Ames, 1992). Related to Principles 10 and 12, new teachers experience instructional difficulties when they lack knowledge about learning patterns that are associated with age (Alexander & Knight, 1993). In short, research shows that practices that reflect the LCPs are associated with positive learning outcomes for students.

Other researchers also have called attention to the positive effect of using learner-centered practices in schools and classrooms. Weinstein (1998) found that when a "learner-centered model of expectancy communication" (p. 92) was used as a building-wide intervention at one urban and ethnically diverse school, increased positive student motivation and student performance resulted. Lewis, Schaps, and Watson (1995) maintain that schools should be both challenging and caring; no longer should the pendulum swing between academically rigorous environments and those that focus on students' social adjustment. The authors write that "to promote students' ethical, social, and intellectual development simultaneously, schools must establish three core conditions: important, engaging curriculum and pedagogy; intrinsic motivation; and a caring community" (p. 549). Therefore, teachers have a new role as catalysts of learning rather than as merely presenters of information and knowledge.

In their book *The Learner-Centered Classroom and School*, McCombs and Whisler (1997) describe the characteristics of successful learner-centered classrooms and schools. Characteristics that are associated with student success include

- structures and practices that support student learning, such as multi-age groupings;
- structures and practices that impact school staff, such as collaborative inquiry;

- structures and practices that encourage parental and community involvement, such as parenting workshops; and

- policies that benefit all learners, such as the promotion of staff development and learning environments that encourage students to construct knowledge.

Darling-Hammond (1996), a national expert on teaching, also supports focusing on learners as a means of creating learning communities that address students' diverse learning needs and teachers' needs for collaborative learning with colleagues. Finally, the National Research Council suggests that learning environments be learner centered by attending to differences among learners in their understandings of a subject, their prior experiences, and their current cultural practices (see Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999).

## Purpose of the School Practices Survey

The School Practices Survey (SPS) measures a school or district's culture and climate as they relate to learner-centered practices. Researchers (e.g., Deal & Peterson, 1999) have found that positive school culture and climate are associated with positive effects on school functioning such as improved communication and collaboration, a shared focus, and successful school change. The SPS asks participants (1) to indicate the extent to which they believe their school or district should have particular policies and practices and (2) to assess their perceptions of the extent to which particular policies and practices are being implemented in their school or district. The SPS also allows test administrators to create additional context-specific questions to include in the survey.

Survey results can be used to support collaborative education reform around learner-centered principles. Individual beliefs about improvement efforts influence whether school staff will commit to achieving a vision for change (see e.g., Stolp & Smith, 1995). As Peterson and Deal (1998) advise, school leaders should know the core values held by their principals, teachers, and parents before trying to reshape a school. The SPS can provide these data for school and district leaders. Understanding the gap between where a school hopes to be in educational practices and how it currently operates can serve as a catalyst for improvement (Freiberg, 1999).

## Examples: Using the Survey

A school or district can use the SPS in a variety of ways. The following examples from a field test of the SPS describe how three sites used the survey and the survey's findings. Section 4 includes additional suggestions for using survey results.

### Example 1: Midwestern Rural School District

*Overview:* The district engaged in reform to address students' affective and cognitive learning needs. The primary change that the district implemented was to restructure its classrooms into multi-age classrooms. Multi-age grouping is an approach focused on learners (APA, 1993) that requires support from other learner-centered practices to be effective.

*Reason for Using the Survey:* The district wanted to know the extent to which administrators, teachers, and classified staff valued these practices and the degree to which they perceived that the practices were already occurring. The district also designed additional questions related to their reform efforts, for example "My level of understanding of the district's overall reform/restructuring plan is none, low, moderate, high."

*Survey Results:* District personnel believed that the surveyed practices should be used in their district, but administrators agreed more strongly that learner-centered practices are ideal than did teachers. Similarly, the perceptions of real practices varied among the groups of participants and among the categories of practices. When the SPS was administered again one year later, respondents' perceptions that learner-centered practices were occurring had increased. District leaders used the findings from both SPS administrations to help them understand district views regarding the restructuring underway and to plan additional staff development.

## Example 2: Southwestern U.S. Elementary School

*Overview:* A school administrator was applying for a grant to support school reform based around a learner-centered framework. Efforts to improve student learning had been unfocused and marginally successful. School leaders thought that incorporating learner-centered principles would aid the school's efforts to change their practices.

*Reason for Using the Survey:* The school used the SPS to examine the views of faculty, staff, and parents regarding the value of and need for such a change in approach.

*Survey Results:* The SPS results indicated that, in general, respondents supported the change and thought it was needed, although the responses of parents and staff differed across the categories of school practices. Although the school did not obtain the grant, they did proceed with adopting a learner-centered framework as the basis of their strategic improvement plan.

## Example 3: Rural Southern High School

*Overview:* The high school had begun a program of professional development in which some of the ninth-grade teachers were studying the learner-centered principles and using them in their classrooms. Because of the success these teachers were experiencing with students, they suggested that a learner-centered framework be adopted throughout the high school.

*Reason for Using the Survey:* The lead teacher in this effort administered the SPS to school administrators, teachers, and board members to determine the extent to which respondents were aware of and valued learner-centered practices.

*Survey Results:* Analysis of particular categories of survey items revealed that differences between ideal and real ratings were most apparent between administrators and board members. Answers to individual items were compared to clarify the views of the two groups and to stimulate discussion.

# *Section 2*
# THE SCHOOL PRACTICES SURVEY INSTRUMENT

This section provides background technical information about the development of the survey instrument, including field-testing results. It also includes guidelines for schools and districts for planning and implementing an administration of the survey.

## Summary of Survey Development

In the first step of survey development, McREL staff who helped write the learner-centered principles (LCPs) identified education practices that are consistent with the principles. These practices were incorporated into a checklist, which was reviewed by other consultants who had worked on the LCPs. Based on their input, the checklist was revised and rewritten in a survey format that had been used by researchers for schoolwide questionnaires about school climate (Howard, Howell, & Brainard, 1987) and school excellence (McREL Institute, 1992). This format requires respondents to indicate whether a practice should be occurring in their schools (*ideal* school practice) and whether that same practice is actually occurring in their schools (*real* school practice).

The next steps in developing the survey were the pilot- and field-testing phases, during which participants were sampled from different states, administration sites, and with different work and personal backgrounds. Table 2 summarizes the field-test results. The following are the key findings from statistical analyses of the data:

- The 90 survey items (45 two-part items) constitute seven categories[2] of school practices.
- The seven categories are composed of survey items that are internally consistent and reliable.
- Each of the categories of school practices received a high ideal rating, indicating that on average respondents agreed that these practices are ideal.
- On average, there was a statistically significant difference between respondents' ideal and real ratings of each learner-centered practice.
- The degree of differences between ideal and real ratings on the SPS varied by category of practice and type of administration site.
- Some variations in SPS ratings were associated with participants' position level, gender, ethnicity, and experiential variables such as grade level and years at current school.

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[2] The categories function as descriptors of practices that are correlated and related to the same aspect of an educational setting. The categories are not meant to function as predictive scales.

**Table 2. Mean Ideal and Real School Practices — Field-Test Results**

| School Practice | Participant Level | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Administrator* (n = 41) | | *Certified Faculty/Staff* (n = 471) | | *Classified Staff* (n = 131) | | *Parent* (n = 38) | |
| | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | Mean | SD |
| ***Curriculum and Assessment*** | | | | | | | | |
| Ideal | 4.65 | .57 | 4.50 | .62 | 4.01 | .96 | 4.02 | .72 |
| Real | 2.86 | .69 | 2.89 | .73 | 3.12 | .84 | 3.08 | .74 |
| ***Motivation and Expectations*** | | | | | | | | |
| Ideal | 4.74 | .46 | 4.63 | .62 | 4.06 | 1.16 | 4.54 | .61 |
| Real | 3.01 | .69 | 3.17 | .79 | 3.19 | .94 | 3.36 | .62 |
| ***Staff Development*** | | | | | | | | |
| Ideal | 4.80 | .47 | 4.64 | .65 | 4.14 | .96 | 4.19 | .65 |
| Real | 2.82 | .78 | 2.74 | .85 | 3.10 | .87 | 3.18 | .75 |
| ***Leadership and Policy*** | | | | | | | | |
| Ideal | 4.43 | .69 | 4.38 | .70 | 3.96 | .91 | 4.00 | .69 |
| Real | 2.63 | .84 | 2.61 | .79 | 3.07 | .85 | 2.95 | .80 |
| ***Instructional Management*** | | | | | | | | |
| Ideal | 4.62 | .60 | 4.45 | .68 | 4.04 | .94 | 4.02 | .73 |
| Real | 2.78 | .91 | 2.88 | .83 | 3.00 | .95 | 3.12 | .75 |
| ***Social Environment*** | | | | | | | | |
| Ideal | 4.80 | .38 | 4.69 | .61 | 4.24 | 1.01 | 4.48 | .64 |
| Real | 3.18 | .65 | 3.08 | .85 | 3.23 | .92 | 3.29 | .86 |
| ***Instruction*** | | | | | | | | |
| Ideal | 4.58 | .42 | 4.49 | .64 | 3.87 | 1.03 | 4.29 | .58 |
| Real | 2.88 | .66 | 2.93 | .71 | 3.03 | .86 | 3.27 | .76 |

*Note:* Respondents were asked to identify the degree to which they agreed that a practice should be occurring in their schools (*ideal*) and the degree to which they agreed that the same practice was actually occurring in their schools (*real*). A 1–5 scale is used: 1 = Strongly Disagree. 5 = Strongly Agree.

## Guidelines for Using the Survey

*(The School Practices Survey can be found in the appendix.)*

**Planning.** The following planning guidelines are for school or district leaders who are considering using the SPS:

- Form a SPS team comprised of representatives of groups of survey respondents (e.g., teachers, administrators) and other staff who might use the results (e.g., directors of staff development).

- Collaboratively identify the specific purpose for administering the SPS, the details of the administration process, and how the results will be used.

- Consider the political ramifications of asking various groups (e.g., board members) to participate.

- Consider whether additional optional questions should be added to the survey. If questions are added, discuss how responses will be used and coded. Avoid questions that invade respondents' privacy.

**Implementation.** The following implementation guidelines are for the teams responsible for administering the SPS and analyzing the results:

- Establish a code for different groups (or levels) of participants for data analysis purposes (e.g., 1 = administrator, 2 = certified staff, 3 = classified staff). *Note:* If your school or district is small (e.g., there are only two administrators), it is not appropriate to identify participants by groups or levels.

- Protect respondents' anonymity. Do not ask respondents to provide their names or other identifying information.

- Respect respondents' confidentiality. Seek permission from participants to report any group comparisons. Do not report results for groups with fewer than six participants.

- Encourage but do not insist on staff participation.

- Share the general SPS results with respondents and explain their meaning and usefulness to the school and/or district.

- Make the SPS results visible in school and district action planning.

## *Section 3*
# ANALYSIS AND REPORTING OF SURVEY RESULTS

This section reviews guidelines for analyzing survey data manually, with Excel software, and with SPSS software[3]. The analyses are based on the seven categories of school practices indicated on the survey. Survey results can be reported in tabular form or in graphs, as shown in this section. Results can be compared across different groups or levels of participants. Comparisons of survey data also can be made with the category means and standard deviations that resulted from the field test of the survey, shown in Table 2. For greater clarification of results, data also can be analyzed separately for individual survey items. Please note that analyses of results for optional additional questions will depend on the nature of the data collected. Calculation of descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means, and standard deviations is usually sufficient.

To facilitate data analysis and reporting, each of the survey items has been assigned a unique code ranging from "sp1" to "sp90." The following data format is used for all SPS analyses:

A (Strongly Disagree) = 1 B = 2, C = 3, D = 4, E = 5 (Strongly Agree)

## Manual Data Analysis

(*Blank forms are available in the appendix.*)

1. Fill in a *School Practices Survey Individual Scoring Sheet* for each respondent, as shown in Exhibit 1. Calculate each respondent's mean for each practice category. Use one sheet per respondent. If it is important and appropriate to track participant responses by level, add a code to the top of the scoring sheet. This information can be used later to analyze responses for different participant groups. (If additional questions have been identified, for example demographic questions, respondents' answers to these questions can be written at the bottom of the *Individual Scoring Sheet*.)

**Exhibit 1. School Practices Survey Individual Scoring Sheet**

| **Instruction** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Ideal** | Score | Value | **Real** | Score | Value |
| sp 83 | D | 4.00 | sp 84 | B | 2.00 |
| sp 85 | C | 3.00 | sp 86 | A | 1.00 |
| sp 87 | D | 4.00 | sp 88 | C | 3.00 |
| sp 89 | E | 5.00 | sp 90 | D | 4.00 |
| Total of Values = 16.00 | | | Total of Values = 10.00 | | |
| Ideal Instruction Mean = 4.00 | | | Real Instruction Mean = 2.50 | | |

[3] The SPS data analysis diskette that accompanies this guide has worksheets for Excel and command files for SPSS. The actual Excel and SPSS software must be provided by the user.

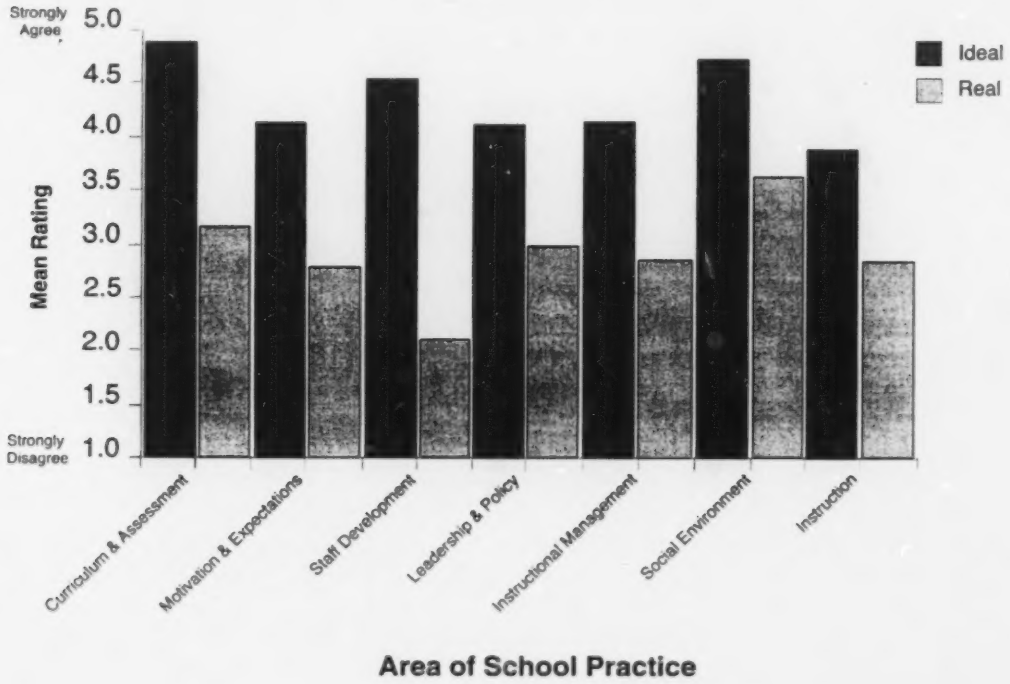
2. Calculate the overall means for ideal and real ratings for each of the seven categories using the School Practices Survey Summary Sheet. Exhibit 2 shows the mean ideal and ratings for five respondents for the category of Instruction.

**Exhibit 2. School Practices Survey Summary Sheet**

| Respondent No. | Instruction | |
|---|---|---|
| | Ideal | Real |
| 1 | 4.00 | 2.50 |
| 2 | 4.25 | 3.00 |
| 3 | 4.50 | 3.25 |
| 4 | 3.75 | 1.75 |
| 5 | 4.00 | 3.75 |
| TOTAL | 20.50 | 14.25 |
| MEAN | 4.10 | 2.85 |

3. Graph the overall means as shown in Exhibit 3.

**Exhibit 3. School Practices Survey — General Results**



## Data Analysis Using Excel Version 7.0 or Higher

1. Open the Excel program and choose "File." Open the "schlsurv" file in the "excel" directory on the Data Analysis Diskette enclosed with this manual. (Open the file as "read only" to protect the programming. Then save it under a different file name.) There are four worksheets included in the "schlsurv" workbook:

   - Data Entry
   - Var Av
   - Mean and SD (overall)
   - Chart 1

2. To enter data, click on the "Data Entry" tab at the bottom of the screen. If desired, enter the respondent's participant level using predetermined coding. (The program can hold up to 1,000 respondents.) Enter each respondent's answers to the SPS questions in the yellow columns corresponding to sp1–sp90, as shown in Exhibit 4. Enter each respondent's answers to any additional questions, for example demographic questions, in spd91–spd100. (If needed, create additional "spd" columns to the far right of the spreadsheet.) The variables sp1–sp90 are programmed for data between 1 and 5. If a question was not answered, leave the data entry cell blank. ***Do not*** enter "0" for missing data.

**Exhibit 4. Excel Spreadsheet**

| Participant Level | SP1 | SP2 | SP3 | SP4 | SP5 | SP6 | SP7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.00 | 5.00 | 2.00 | 4.00 | 2.00 | 5.00 |
| 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.00 | 5.00 | 4.00 | 5.00 | 3.00 | |
| 1.00 | 5.00 | | 5.00 | 3.00 | 5.00 | 3.00 | 5.00 |
| 2.00 | 3.00 | 2.00 | 5.00 | | 2.00 | 1.00 | 3.00 |
| 2.00 | 5.00 | 4.00 | 5.00 | 2.00 | 4.00 | 2.00 | 5.00 |
| 2.00 | 5.00 | 3.00 | 5.00 | 4.00 | 4.00 | 2.00 | 5.00 |
| 2.00 | 3.00 | 3.00 | 5.00 | 2.00 | 3.00 | 3.00 | 5.00 |

3. Excel will calculate each respondent's means for the seven categories for ideal and real ratings in the blue columns located to the far right of the "Data Entry" worksheet. The spreadsheet is pre-programmed to make these calculations for six respondents. (Note:"#DIV/0!" in a cell means that not enough data have been entered to execute a formula.) To obtain category means for *more than* six respondents, use the following steps for *each* of the seven practice categories:

   - Highlight the cell of the first respondent under the category label (to the far right of the worksheet) and copy the cell. For example, highlight cell CY3 under the category CURAS_I and click on the copy button.

   - Highlight the additional number of rows that will be needed and click on the paste button. For example, if there were an additional 10 respondents, highlight cells CY9–CY18 under the category CURAS_I.

4. Excel will then calculate the overall means and standard deviations for the seven practice categories and enter them with the category means into a table, such as that shown in Exhibit 5. To view the table, click on the "Mean and SD (overall)" tab at the bottom of the screen. (The "Var Av" sheet is a step in the process of obtaining the table. This sheet calculates the overall means for each survey item and can be used for item analysis.)

**Exhibit 5. Excel: Survey Summary — Table**

| School Practice | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|
| **Curriculum and Assessment - Ideal** | 4.53 | 0.54 |
| **Curriculum and Assessment - Real** | 2.65 | 0.61 |
| **Motivation and Expectations - Ideal** | 4.49 | 0.61 |
| **Motivation and Expectations - Real** | 2.96 | 0.59 |
| **Staff Development - Ideal** | 4.50 | 0.50 |
| **Staff Development - Real** | 2.61 | 0.79 |
| **Leadership and Policy - Ideal** | 4.37 | 0.67 |
| **Leadership and Policy - Real** | 2.97 | 0.63 |
| **Instructional Management - Ideal** | 4.78 | 0.32 |
| **Instructional Management - Real** | 2.82 | 0.68 |
| **Social Environment - Ideal** | 4.52 | 0.54 |
| **Social Environment - Real** | 2.38 | 0.87 |
| **Instruction - Ideal** | 4.30 | 0.67 |
| **Instruction - Real** | 2.43 | 0.60 |

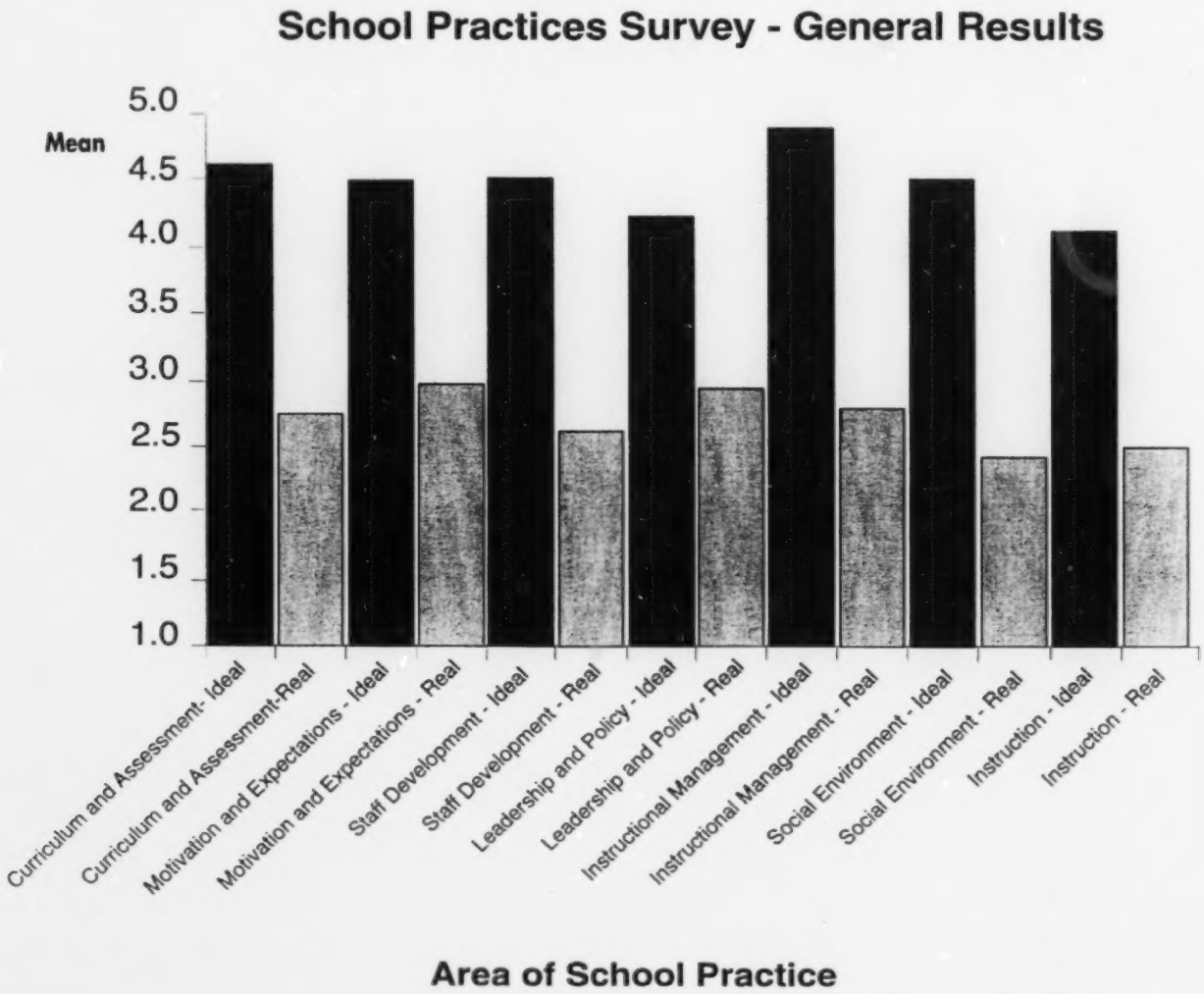
5. To display data in a bar graph, click on the "Chart 1" tab at the bottom of the screen. (See Exhibit 6.) Edit as needed. (*Note: The graph shown in Exhibit 6 was produced using Excel 97. Lower versions of Excel may produce graphs that look somewhat different.)*

6. To obtain separate results for different participant groups, follow these steps for *each* group for which you want separate data:

   - Highlight "Participant Level" and click on the Data menu at the top of the screen. Choose "Sort" and select "Participant Level." Then click "ok."

   - Delete data pertaining to all but the target participant group in which you are interested. Go to File and click Save As and save the file under a new name (e.g., "Teacherdat"). This is an important step to avoid saving over the original spreadsheet that contains all of the original data.

Exhibit 6. Excel: School Practices Survey — General Results



## Data Analysis Using SPSS Version 6.1 or Higher

1. In the data window of your SPSS program, open "sprdsht.sav" in the "spss" directory on the Data Analysis Diskette that accompanies this manual.

2. Enter each respondent's answers to the survey questions in the columns corresponding to sp1–sp90, as shown in Exhibit 7. If desired, enter each respondent's participant level using your predetermined coding. Enter each respondent's answers to any additional questions (e.g., demographic questions) in spd91–spd100. (If needed, create additional "spd" columns.)

**Exhibit 7. SPSS Spreadsheet**

| | Level | sp1 | sp2 | sp3 | sp4 | sp5 | sp6 | sp7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.00 | 5.00 | 2.00 | 4.00 | 2.00 | 5.00 |
| 2 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.00 | 5.00 | 4.00 | 5.00 | 3.00 | 5.00 |
| 3 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.00 | 5.00 | 3.00 | 5.00 | . | . |
| 4 | 1.00 | 4.00 | 4.00 | 4.00 | 4.00 | 4.00 | 5.00 | 5.00 |
| 5 | 1.00 | 5.00 | . | 5.00 | 2.00 | 5.00 | 2.00 | 5.00 |
| 6 | 2.00 | 5.00 | 3.00 | 5.00 | 3.00 | 4.00 | 2.00 | 4.00 |
| 7 | 2.00 | 3.00 | 2.00 | 5.00 | 3.00 | 2.00 | . | 3.00 |

3. The variables sp1–sp90 are programmed for data between 1 and 5. If a question was not answered, enter a period in the cell to indicate missing data. ***Do not*** enter "0."

4. To obtain each respondent's mean for each ideal and real practice category, in the syntax window open "category.sps." Highlight and run the program.

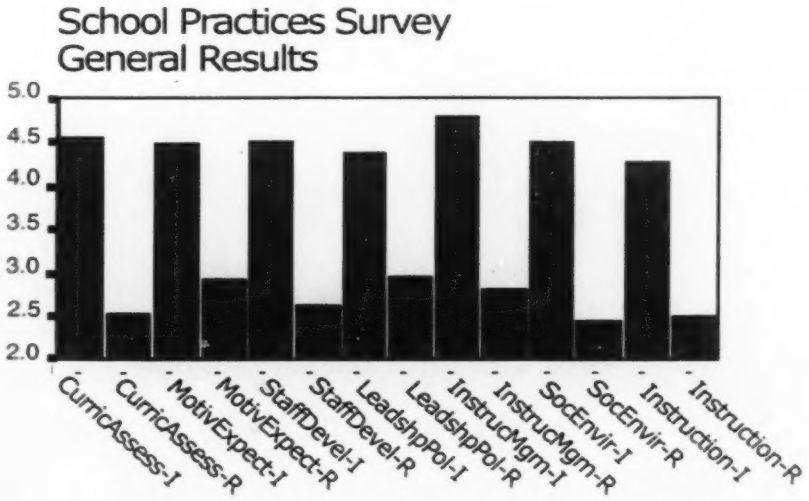
5. To obtain descriptive statistics for the seven practice categories, open "descrip.sps." Highlight and run the program. (See Exhibit 8.)

**Exhibit 8. SPSS Sample Output — Descriptive Statistics**

```
CURAS_I = Curric & Assess

Mean      4.527   Median    4.727   Mode      5.000
Std dev    .542   Range     1.636

Valid cases    10   Missing cases    0
-----------------------------------------
CURAS_R  = Curric & Assess

Mean      2.655   Median    2.545   Mode      2.545
Std dev    .615   Range     1.636

Valid cases    10   Missing cases    0
```

6. To create a graph of general results, open "gengraph.sps." Highlight and run the program. (See Exhibit 9.) *Note:* The graphs shown in Exhibits 9, 10, and 11 have not been edited. Use SPSS chart editing to make any changes to the format of the graph.

**Exhibit 9. SPSS: School Practices Survey — General Results**

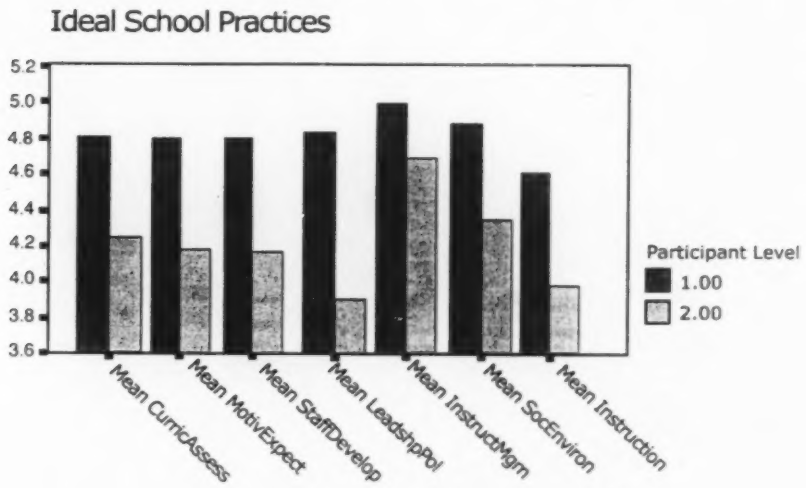



Degree of agreement that surveyed school practices should exist (Ideal) or do exist (Real). Scale: 1 (Strongly Disagree) - 5 (Strongly Agree)

7. To obtain separate results for different participant groups, choose "Data," "Split File," and then "Level." Open "descrip.sps." Highlight and run the program.

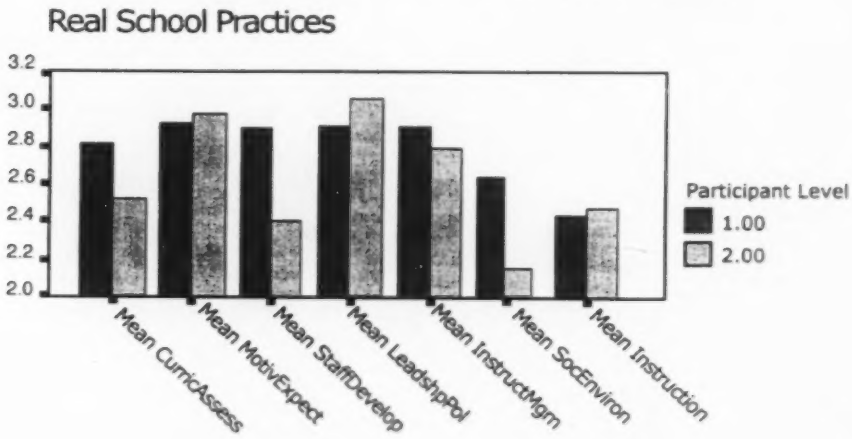
8. To create graphs of ideal and real ratings for different participant levels, open "levgraph.sps." Highlight and run the program. (If "Split File" command is operating, first deactivate this command.) After creating graphs, in chart editor choose "Series," "Transpose Data." (See Exhibits 10 and 11).

**Exhibit 10. SPSS: Graph of Ideal School Practices Results**




Degree of agreement that surveyed school practices should exist (Ideal) or do exist (Real). Scale: 1 (Strongly Disagree) - 5 (Strongly Agree)

**Exhibit 11. SPSS: Graph of Real School Practices Results**




Degree of agreement that surveyed school practices should exist (Ideal) or do exist (Real). Scale: 1 (Strongly Disagree) - 5 (Strongly Agree)

# *Section 4*
# USING SURVEY RESULTS

Results from the SPS reflect two assessments: (1) the degree to which respondents value learner-centered school practices and (2) the degree to which respondents perceive that these practices are occurring in their schools or districts. SPS results are valuable feedback that can serve a number of purposes. For example, survey results can inform staff development planning related to one or more specific learner-centered practices. The following process can be used by a school or district to understand the implications of survey results in light of the purpose for administering the survey.

## Discussion of Results

Analyze and report the results in tables and graphs as suggested in Section 3. Convene the SPS team to discuss and interpret the results. Use the following questions to guide the discussion.

**Ideal School Practices**

- In general, did respondents agree or disagree that the learner-centered practices represented by SPS items are ideal school practices?
- Did respondents' assessments of ideal school practices vary among the categories of school practices? If so, what differences were apparent?
- Was there a high degree of variability (e.g., standard deviations greater than 1.00) across the categories of school practices?[4] If so, what might explain this variability?
- How did the responses of different groups of participants vary?[5] Based on knowledge of the school and/or district, what might explain these differences ? (Compare *ideal* results with those obtained from the SPS field testing [Table 2].)

**Real School Practices**

- In general, did respondents agree or disagree that the learner-centered practices represented by SPS items are occurring in the school or district?
- Did respondents' assessment of real school practices vary among the categories of school practices. If so, what differences were apparent?

---

[4] To answer this question, standard deviations (or some other measure of variability) need to be calculated. The Excel and SPSS command files on the data analysis diskette both calculate the standard deviation for each of the seven practice categories.

[5] This question assumes that different groups of participants responded to the survey and a code was used to identify and analyze results for the different groups.

- Was there a high degree of variability (e.g., standard deviations greater than 1.00) across the categories of school practices? If so, what might explain this variability?
- How did the responses of different groups of participants vary? Based on knowledge of the school and/or district, what might explain these differences? (Compare *real* results with those obtained from the SPS field testing [Table 2].)

**Discrepancy Between Ideal and Real School Practices**

- In general, what is the amount of discrepancy between ideal and real school practices?
- Does the discrepancy vary among categories of school practices? If so, between or among what categories did differences occur? What might explain these differences?
- Does the discrepancy vary among groups of participants? What might explain these differences?

**Summary of Results**

- What categories of school practices did respondents perceive as less than *ideal* (i.e., what categories did respondents, on the average, give an ideal rating of 3.0 or below)? What are the survey items in this category? Should these practices be valued? Why or why not?
- What categories included school practices that respondents perceive as not occurring in the school or district *(real)* (i.e., what categories did respondents, on the average, give a real rating of 3.0 or below)? What are the survey items in this category? Should these practices be occurring? Why or why not?
- Was there a large amount of variability in respondents' ratings of either ideal or real practices? What are the ramifications of these differences in perceptions?
- In what category of school practices was there the largest difference between what should *ideally* be occurring and what is *actually* occurring? What survey items are in this category? What steps can be taken to make changes that will address this discrepancy?
- If optional questions were added to the survey, the SPS team should discuss the results for these questions and determine how they should be interpreted and reported.

## Follow-up Staff Development

After discussing the results, the SPS team should prepare a report that presents the overall results in tables and graphs and summarizes the team's discussions. An effective way to deliver the results is at a staff in-service session. Present the results verbally and visually and explain how they were interpreted. Survey participants should have the opportunity to give their feedback on the content of the survey, the administration process, and what the results mean. The SPS team then can recommend appropriate follow-up activities based on SPS results. The following are examples of staff development activities that schools or districts might create around learner-centered practices.

**Learner-Centered Study Groups**

- ***Purpose:*** To gain a better understanding of learner-centered practices and their benefits.

- ***Materials:*** Each participant should have a copy of *How Students Learn: Reforming Schools Through Learner-Centered Education*, by. N. M. Lambert & B. L. McCombs (eds.), 1998, Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

- ***Instructions:*** Participants should collaboratively design how the study group will function. For suggestions, consult *Teacher Study Groups for Professional Development*, by G. Cramer, B. Hurst, and C. Wilson., 1996, Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation.

**Learner-Centered Principles Jigsaw**

- ***Purpose:*** To gain a better understanding of the meaning and practical uses of the learner-centered principles.

- ***Materials:*** Each participant should have a copy of the *Learner-Centered Psychological Principles: A Framework for School Reform and Redesign* (revised ed.), by the American Psychological Association Board of Educational Affairs, 1997, Washington, DC: APA. Copies are available at http://www.apa.org/ed/lcp.html

- ***Instructions:*** Participants should divide into four groups that reflect the four categories of learner-centered principles: Cognitive and Metacognitive Factors; Motivational and Affective Factors; Developmental and Social Factors; and Individual Differences Factors. (Since the first category has more principles than the other three, more people can be assigned to this group.) The task is for each group member to (1) explain the principle to the rest of the group in his or her own words and (2) describe how the principle can be applied in the classroom or in his or her current position, for example as an administrator or classified staff member. Small-group work should be followed by a large-group discussion, during which a spokesperson from each small group summarizes what the group learned about its assigned principles.

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# APPENDIX

SCHOOL PRACTICES SURVEY ..... 27

SCHOOL PRACTICES SURVEY SCORING SHEET ..... 33

SCHOOL PRACTICES SURVEY SUMMARY SHEET ..... 35

SCHOOL PRACTICES SURVEY — GENERAL RESULTS ..... 36

Respondent Number: ____ Participant Level: ____

# SCHOOL PRACTICES SURVEY

***DIRECTIONS:*** The purpose of this survey is to look at how people think their schools and districts could be changed for the better. The survey helps you assess what you believe your school or district *should have* (**your ideal**) in terms of policies and practices and what policies and practices your school or district *already has* (**actual or real practice**). For each statement, think about and respond to **both parts**, indicating the degree to which you agree with each statement as an **ideal or goal (odd number)** and the degree to which it **already exists and is real in your school (even number)**. Respond from the perspective most relevant to you: your **current school**, your **current district**, or your **most recent school or district experience**. Using a **pencil,** blacken the bubble on the answer sheet that best indicates your choice on **both parts** according to the following scale:

**Strongly Disagree ---------- Strongly Agree**
**A B C D E**

**Remember that each statement has two parts. Mark BOTH your ideal answer and your real answer to each statement.** (Note: A general purpose answer sheet with a five-choice response format is recommended, such as National Computer Systems form no. 19543.)

**Example:**

191–192 School buildings that are colorful.
191. Ideal answer (odd number) 192. Real answer (even number)

191. If you strongly agree that school buildings **should** be colorful (your **ideal**), you would blacken E on the answer sheet for number 191. If you strongly disagree that school buildings should be colorful, you would blacken A for 191. (Or blacken D, C, or B depending on the amount of your agreement or disagreement with the statement as an ideal.)

192. If you strongly agree that school buildings in your district are **already** colorful (what's **really** present), you would blacken E on the answer sheet for number 192. If you strongly disagree that the school buildings in your district are already colorful, you would blacken A for 192. (Or blacken D, C, or B depending on the amount of your agreement or disagreement with the statement as a description of what's really present in your district.)

**Mark one ideal answer (A, B, C, D, or E) <u>and</u> one real answer (A, B, C, D, or E) for each statement. There are 5 pages, 90 questions, and one answer sheet.** (There also might be some additional questions on your specific school or district or on your demographic background.) **Do not put your name on your answer sheet. Return both the survey booklet and answer sheet to the survey administrator. Thank you for your participation.** (If for any reason you feel that you cannot fill out a survey, please return your survey and answer sheet to the administrator.)

Respondent Number: ____ Participant Level: ____

**Strongly Disagree ---------- Strongly Agree**
**A B C D E**

**Curriculum & Assessment**

1 – 2. Curricula that help students engage in learning strategies (e.g., reflection and goal setting).
1. Ideal Answer 2. Real Answer

3 – 4. Learning activities that include real-world tasks.
3. Ideal Answer 4. Real Answer

5 – 6. Curricula that help students integrate information and skills across subject matter disciplines.
5. Ideal Answer 6. Real Answer

7 – 8. Curricula that help students understand and respect their own cultural and other perspectives.
7. Ideal Answer 8. Real Answer

9 –10. Curricula that help students understand how their thoughts affect how well they learn.
9. Ideal Answer 10. Real Answer

11 – 12. Curricula that help students continually assess their learning progress.
11. Ideal Answer 12. Real Answer

13 – 14. Assessment practices that foster self-regulated learning (e.g., self-evaluation, monitoring learning progress).
13. Ideal Answer 14. Real Answer

15 – 16. Assessment practices that are fair and equitable to all students (different achievement, language, culture).
15. Ideal Answer 16. Real Answer

17 – 18. Practices that assess students' affective and cognitive reactions to curricula.
17. Ideal Answer 18. Real Answer

19 – 20. Assessment practices that have standards based on student selected or collaborative learning goals.
19. Ideal Answer 20. Real Answer

21 – 22. Practices that develop learning communities where students and staff are co-learners.
21. Ideal Answer 22. Real Answer

Respondent Number: ____ Participant Level: ____

**Strongly Disagree ---------- Strongly Agree**
**A B C D E**

**Motivation & Expectations**

23 – 24. Staff at all levels who respect and value students as individuals.
23. Ideal Answer 24. Real Answer

25 – 26. Faculty who believe that all students learn.
25. Ideal Answer 26. Real Answer

27 – 28. Faculty who provide alternative strategies so that all students can learn.
27. Ideal Answer 28. Real Answer

29 – 30. Learning tasks that are designed to involve many abilities so that all students can succeed.
29. Ideal Answer 30. Real Answer

31 – 32. Practices that avoid stereotyping students, such as tracking or labeling.
31. Ideal Answer 32. Real Answer

33 – 34. Staff at all levels who respect students and do not use sarcasm or put-downs.
33. Ideal Answer 34. Real Answer

35 – 36. Learning activities that attend to emotions and behavior, as well as thinking.
35. Ideal Answer 36. Real Answer

**Staff Development**

37 – 38. Opportunities to learn about individual differences that affect learning.
37. Ideal Answer 38. Real Answer

39 – 40. Opportunities to self-assess and reflect on how to implement more effective teaching practices.
39. Ideal Answer 40. Real Answer

41 – 42. Training in how to demonstrate respect and caring while maintaining an organized classroom.
41. Ideal Answer 42. Real Answer

43 – 44. Time for teacher discussions, collaboration, and teaming to design new teaching strategies.
43. Ideal Answer 44. Real Answer

45 – 46. Training in ways to help students make responsible choices about their own learning.
45. Ideal Answer 46. Real Answer

Respondent Number: ____ Participant Level: ____

**Strongly Disagree ---------- Strongly Agree**
**A B C D E**

**Staff Development (continued)**

47 – 48. Training on how to use curricula in ways that challenge diverse students.
47. Ideal Answer 48. Real Answer

49 – 50. Policies that commit to integrating physical health, mental health, and social services.
49. Ideal Answer 50. Real Answer

**Leadership & Policy**

51 – 52. Instruction that is flexible and not bound to time schedules.
51. Ideal Answer 52. Real Answer

53 – 54. Strategies that encourage students to learn with and from each other (e.g., across age levels).
53. Ideal Answer 54. Real Answer

55 – 56. Policies that emphasize the learner's growth rather than rigidly tying content to age or grade.
55. Ideal Answer 56. Real Answer

57 – 58. Policies that acknowledge student diversity by avoiding the use of single programs/standards.
57. Ideal Answer 58. Real Answer

59 – 60. Policies that provide teachers with flexibility in time and schedules.
59. Ideal Answer 60. Real Answer

61 – 62. Policies that provide alternatives to grades for rewarding student learning.
61. Ideal Answer 62. Real Answer

**Instructional Management**

63 – 64. Practices that address multiple academic and non-academic outcomes, talents, and potentials.
63. Ideal Answer 64. Real Answer

65 – 66. Options for students to develop special talents (e.g., artistic, musical, spatial, physical, social).
65. Ideal Answer 66. Real Answer

67 – 68. Learning environments that encourage student choice in topics of study.
67. Ideal Answer 68. Real Answer

Respondent Number: ____ Participant Level: ____

**Strongly Disagree ---------- Strongly Agree**
**A B C D E**

**Instructional Management (continued)**

69 – 70. Learning environments that encourage student choice in types of projects within topics.
69. Ideal Answer 70. Real Answer

71 – 72. Learning environments that encourage student choice in independent or group learning.
71. Ideal Answer 72. Real Answer

**Social Environment**

73 – 74. Learning environments that are warm, supportive, and promote a sense of belonging.
73. Ideal Answer 74. Real Answer

75 – 76. Learning environments that provide high standards and optimistic expectations for all students.
75. Ideal Answer 76. Real Answer

77 – 78. Policies that make explicit high expectations for the learning success of all students.
77. Ideal Answer 78. Real Answer

79 – 80. Policies that promote relations among teachers and between teachers and administration.
79. Ideal Answer 80. Real Answer

81 – 82. Policies for decision making that include students as well as teachers, parents, and community.
81. Ideal Answer 82. Real Answer

**Instruction**

83 – 84. Instructional practices that present information in multiple ways (e.g.,visual, auditory, kinesthetic).
83. Ideal Answer 84. Real Answer

85 – 86 Opportunities for students to achieve mastery on developmentally appropriate tasks.
85. Ideal Answer 86. Real Answer

87 – 88. Practices that involve students in creating their own individual learning plans.
87. Ideal Answer 88. Real Answer

89 – 90. Practices that encourage students to understand, and take responsibility for their own learning.
89. Ideal Answer 90. Real Answer

Respondent Number: ____ Participant Level: ____

**Example Optional Additional Questions**

The following section on the survey is for schools and districts to design questions that are specific to their own needs and reform agendas. Below are six examples including one write-in question. A general purpose answer sheet with a five-choice response format is recommended, such as National Computer Systems form no. 19543.

Please answer **all** questions. Mark only **one answer** to each question. (N/A = Not Applicable- does not apply)

91. I believe that my school needs change.
    Strongly Disagree ---------- Strongly Agree
    A B C D E

92. My level of understanding of the overall reform/restructuring plan in our district is:
    A=none; B=low; C=moderate; D=high

93. Two-way communication exists between the principals and the school staff.
    Strongly Disagree ---------- Strongly Agree
    A B C D E

94. I believe that the following percent of staff in my school are open to change:
    A=0–10; B=11–40; C=41–70; D=71–100; E=N/A)

95. Children in my care have attended school in this district.
    A=No; B=Yes, currently; C=Yes, in the past; D=N/A)

WRITE-IN ANSWER # 1: How can your school and district better support your efforts to adopt the state content standards in your classroom? Please write specific examples in WRITE-IN AREA 1 on the front of the answer sheet. Do not write outside the box.

Respondent Number: _____ Participant Level: _____

# SCHOOL PRACTICES SURVEY
# INDIVIDUAL SCORING SHEET

*Instructions:*

- Use one scoring sheet for each respondent.
- Enter the letter answer next to each survey item in the "Score" column.
- Convert the letter to a value: A=1, B=2, C=3, D=4, E=5 (***Do not*** assign a value for unanswered questions. Leave the space blank.)
- Add the values in each column and enter the total. Divide the total by the number of items answered and enter the category mean.

| **Curriculum & Assessment** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Ideal** | Score | Value | **Real** | Score | Value |
| sp 1 | | | sp 2 | | |
| sp 3 | | | sp 4 | | |
| sp 5 | | | sp 6 | | |
| sp 7 | | | sp 8 | | |
| sp 9 | | | sp10 | | |
| sp 11 | | | sp12 | | |
| sp 13 | | | sp14 | | |
| sp 15 | | | sp16 | | |
| sp 17 | | | sp18 | | |
| sp 19 | | | sp20 | | |
| sp 21 | | | sp22 | | |
| Total of Values = | | | Total of Values = | | |
| Ideal Curriculum & Assessment Mean = | | | Real Curriculum & Assessment Mean = | | |
| **Motivation & Expectations** | | | | | |
| **Ideal** | Score | Value | **Real** | Score | Value |
| sp 23 | | | sp 24 | | |
| sp 25 | | | sp 26 | | |
| sp 27 | | | sp 28 | | |
| sp 29 | | | sp 30 | | |
| sp 31 | | | sp 32 | | |
| sp 33 | | | sp 34 | | |
| sp 35 | | | sp 36 | | |
| Total of Values = | | | Total of Values = | | |
| Ideal Motivation & Expectations Mean = | | | Real Motivation & Expectations Mean = | | |
| **Staff Development** | | | | | |
| **Ideal** | Score | Value | **Real** | Score | Value |
| sp 37 | | | sp 38 | | |
| sp 39 | | | sp 40 | | |
| sp 41 | | | sp 42 | | |
| sp 43 | | | sp 44 | | |
| sp 45 | | | sp 46 | | |
| sp 47 | | | sp 48 | | |
| sp 49 | | | sp 50 | | |
| Total of Values = | | | Total of Values = | | |
| Ideal Staff Development Mean = | | | Real Staff Development Mean = | | |

Respondent Number: _____ Participant Level: _____

| Leadership & Policy | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Ideal** | Score | Value | **Real** | Score | Value |
| sp 51 | | | sp 52 | | |
| sp 53 | | | sp 54 | | |
| sp 55 | | | sp 56 | | |
| sp 57 | | | sp 58 | | |
| sp 59 | | | sp 60 | | |
| sp 61 | | | sp 62 | | |
| Total of Values = | | | Total of Values = | | |
| Ideal Leadership & Policy Mean = | | | Real Leadership & Policy Mean = | | |
| **Instructional Management** | | | | | |
| **Ideal** | Score | Value | **Real** | Score | Value |
| sp 63 | | | sp 64 | | |
| sp 65 | | | sp 66 | | |
| sp 67 | | | sp 68 | | |
| sp 69 | | | sp 70 | | |
| sp 71 | | | sp 72 | | |
| Total of Values = | | | Total of Values = | | |
| Ideal Instructional Management Mean = | | | Real Instructional Management Mean = | | |
| **Social Environment** | | | | | |
| **Ideal** | Score | Value | **Real** | Score | Value |
| sp 73 | | | sp 74 | | |
| sp 75 | | | sp 76 | | |
| sp 77 | | | sp 78 | | |
| sp 79 | | | sp 80 | | |
| sp 81 | | | sp 82 | | |
| Total of Values = | | | Total of Values = | | |
| Ideal Social Environment Mean = | | | Real Social Environment Mean = | | |
| **Instruction** | | | | | |
| **Ideal** | Score | Value | **Real** | Score | Value |
| sp 83 | | | sp 84 | | |
| sp 85 | | | sp 86 | | |
| sp 87 | | | sp 88 | | |
| sp 89 | | | sp 90 | | |
| Total of Values = | | | Total of Values = | | |
| Ideal Instruction Mean = | | | Real Instruction Mean = | | |

## SCHOOL PRACTICES SURVEY SUMMARY SHEET

*Instructions:*

- For each respondent, enter the ideal and real mean for each category. (If there are more than 15 respondents, copy additional sheets.)
- Add the values in each column and enter the total.
- Divide the total by the number of respondents and enter the category mean.

| Respondent No. | Participant Level | Curriculum & Assessment | | Motivations & Expectations | | Staff Development | | Leadership & Policy | | Instructional Management | | Social Environment | | Instruction | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Ideal | Real | Ideal | Real | Ideal | Real | Ideal | Real | Ideal | Real | Ideal | Real | Ideal | Real |
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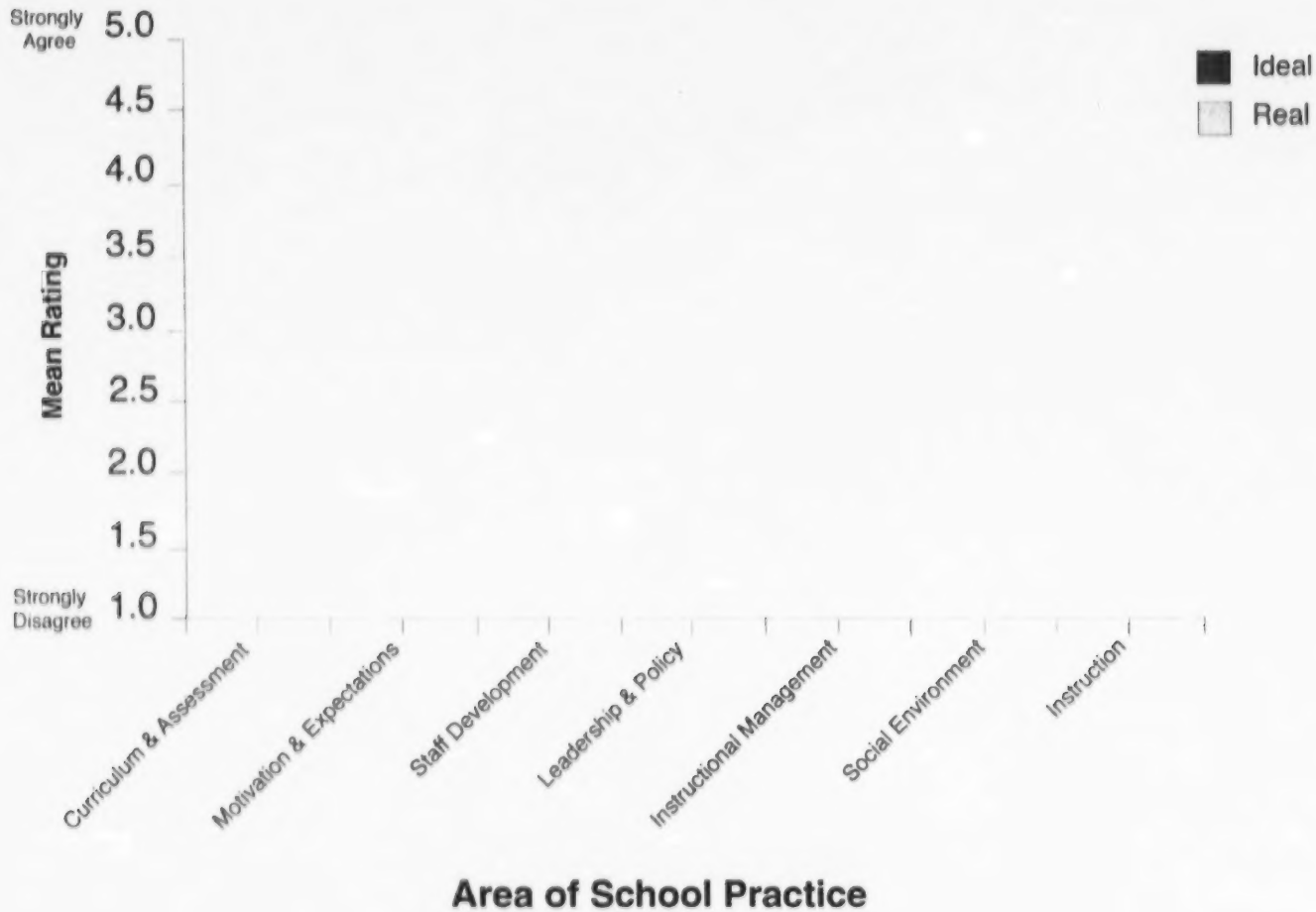
| TOTAL | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| MEAN | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

## SCHOOL PRACTICES SURVEY — GENERAL RESULTS